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MPIfG Discussion Paper 12/9

### **Competing Tactics**

How the Interplay of Tactical Approaches Shapes  
Movement Outcomes on the Market for Ethical Fashion

Philip Balsiger



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## Abstract

Social movements use a variety of tactical approaches to change markets. Through a case study of ethical fashion in Switzerland, this paper looks at how the interplay between different tactical approaches pursued by movement actors shapes the growth of the ethical clothing market. Most studies on the influence of social movements look at single tactical approaches, and rarely discuss tactical competition and its role on outcomes. This paper adopts an interactionist field perspective to see this interplay at work. Three tactical approaches are identified: campaigning, collaboration initiatives, and the promotion of alternative niches. This paper points out the different cultural and social backgrounds behind these approaches and discusses their relationships with one another. It highlights how different tactical approaches may draw on one another, but also stresses instances of tactical competition. In particular, the analysis reveals how collaboration initiatives could be used by firms to sidestep more encompassing demands from the campaign. Furthermore, the analysis highlights how the specific definition of the niche, emerging as an outcome of a dynamic involving campaign actors, collaboration initiatives and firms, constitutes an obstacle to the creation of an alternative niche as advocated by its promoters.

## Zusammenfassung

Soziale Bewegungen nutzen verschiedene Taktiken für ihre Einflussnahme auf Märkte. Am Fallbeispiel des Schweizer Ethik-Modemarkts analysiert dieses Papier, wie das Wechselspiel verschiedener Taktiken das Wachstum dieses Marktes beeinflusst. Die Mehrzahl der Untersuchungen über den Einfluss sozialer Bewegungen konzentriert sich auf eine bestimmte Taktik und lässt taktischen Wettbewerb und dessen Auswirkung auf die Ergebnisse außen vor. Im Gegensatz dazu nimmt dieses Papier eine interaktionistische Perspektive ein und analysiert die Wechselwirkungen verschiedener Taktiken im Marktgeschehen. Dabei werden drei Varianten der taktischen Einflussnahme identifiziert: Kampagnen, Kollaborationsinitiativen sowie die Bewerbung alternativer Nischenmärkte. Das Papier zeigt die verschiedenen kulturellen und gesellschaftlichen Hintergründe dieser Herangehensweisen auf und diskutiert die Wechselbeziehungen. Es macht weiterhin deutlich, wie verschiedene taktische Herangehensweisen aufeinander aufbauen und auch, wie sie miteinander konkurrieren. Insbesondere deckt die Analyse auf, wie Kollaborationsinitiativen von Unternehmen genutzt werden könnten, um aus einer Kampagne resultierende weitergehende Anforderungen umgehen zu können. Darüber hinaus wird deutlich, wie die explizite Definition der Marktnische, die als Folge einer Dynamik entstanden ist, die Kampagnenakteure, Kollaborationsinitiativen und Firmen involviert, die Schaffung eines von ihren Befürwortern propagierten alternativen Nischenmarkts behindert.

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# Competing Tactics: How the Interplay of Tactical Approaches Shapes Movement Outcomes on the Market for Ethical Fashion

## 1 Introduction

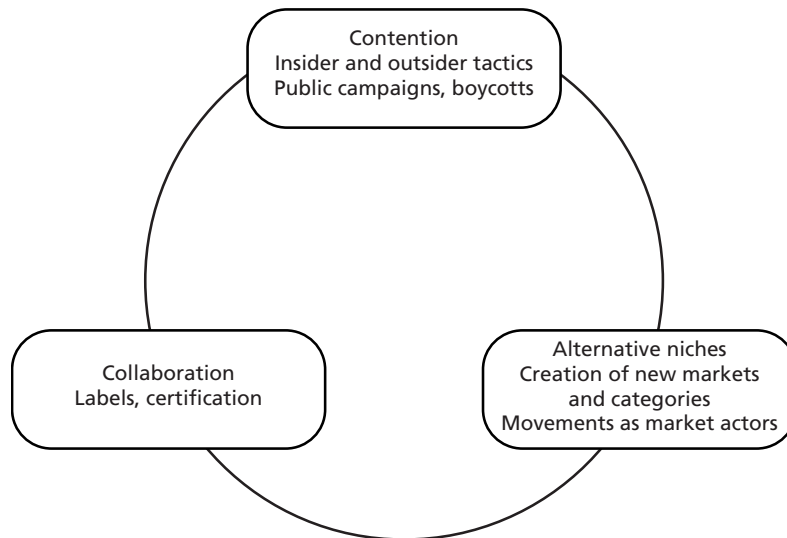
Social movements play various roles in the transformation of markets. New markets rise, building on cultural templates developed in social movements, and existing markets undergo transformations under pressure from movement actors. In a review of the burgeoning literature on the “contentiousness of markets,” King and Pearce (2010) broadly distinguish between three major ways in which movements attempt to change markets: contentious actions inside and outside of firms, collaboration, and the development of new products and categories that constitute new market niches (King/Pearce 2010). Studies on movements and market change have examined all three types of tactical approaches. Such studies can show how the “success” – i.e., the resulting market change – of given tactics is mediated by contextual conditions (King 2008a) and depends on processes involving different actors – movements, firms, states, and other relevant players – trying to shape new markets (Bartley 2007; Weber/Heinze/DeSoucey 2008; Weber/Rao/Thomas 2009).

While it is possible to assess the outcomes of such different tactical approaches individually, they are actually related to one another. Movement organizations are part of “multi-organizational fields” (Curtis/Zurcher 1973) or social movement arenas (Jasper 2011). They pursue similar goals, but use different tactical approaches depending on their social and organizational identities and “cultures of action” (Klawiter 2009). In a dynamic process involving different movement players and their targets, the consequences of one approach may then become an important factor in the contextual “conditions of success” for another one. Focusing on one or the other of these tactical approaches, most studies do not explicitly address this interplay in the transformation of a given market. This is also more generally the case in studies on movement outcomes in the political arena.<sup>1</sup> From an empirical point of view, however, different movement actors very often pursue different approaches concomitantly, and they may be in a competitive or even conflicting relationship. Different tactics, such as those of radical and

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1 Notable exceptions are Piven and Cloward’s study on poor peoples’ movements (1977) and studies revealing the so-called radical-flank effect (Haines 1988), which address the diverse interplay between moderate and radical groups (see Koopmans 1995).

Figure 1 Movement approaches to change markets (based on King/Pearce 2010)



Source: Based on King/Pearce (2010).

reform-oriented organizations, may be complementary and reinforce each other's outcomes, but they may also clash and provoke disputes between movement actors. Given the frequency of such conflicts, studies on movement outcomes have paid surprisingly little attention to their role in achieving change.

In this paper, I address this issue of tactical competition and its role in movement outcomes. How does the interplay of different tactics used by different movement players shape market changes such as the emergence of niches? To tackle this question, I study the rise of ethical fashion in Switzerland. On this market, one observes three kinds of approaches that movement actors have used to fight for ethical fashion. Some movement organizations launched campaigns targeting fashion brands to push them towards the adoption of codes of conduct and independent monitoring. Others developed ethical labels, such as for fair trade or organic cotton production, often in collaboration with particular clothing firms. And some activists and organizations tried to promote an alternative ethical fashion niche, identifying and supporting new producers of ethical clothing. The study retraces the process of the rise of ethical fashion in Switzerland and shows how the transformations are the result of the interplay between the different approaches. Campaigning put the issue on the agenda of firms and paved the way for NGOs pursuing collaboration tactics; but collaboration was also a major competitor for the campaigns, as it allowed firms to sidestep campaign demands. Attempts at creating an alternative niche had to deal with a context marked by the market transformations that had been provoked by the previous interactions between campaigns, NGOs pursuing collaboration, and firms. Focusing on the interplay of tactics enables us to reach a better understanding of the process of market transformation and highlights the ways in which competing approaches shape movement outcomes.

I start by discussing the theoretical framework of the study: the diversity of tactical approaches on the markets and how this sheds light on the question of movement outcomes. After a presentation of the research design, the subsequent empirical section examines the different social movement actors and approaches that one finds on the market for clothing in Switzerland. It follows their occurrence chronologically. In a first step, I examine the relationship between campaigning and collaboration. Second, I address attempts at creating an alternative niche. Contrasting the Swiss case with insights from the development of ethical fashion in France, this section shows how the previous interactions involving campaigning and collaboration shaped the conditions affecting alternative niche creation.

## 2 Social movements and market changes

### Movement tactics on markets

In the past few years, many authors have started analyzing the interactions between social movements and markets/organizations, thus opening up a field of research on the role of social movements in market change (Davis et al. 2005; Davis et al. 2008; King/Pearce 2010; Rao 2009; Soule 2009). Importantly, this literature has pointed out that contentious tactics such as protests are but one way in which movements attempt to change markets. In addition to such classic movement tactics, movements also collaborate with firms and sometimes function as economic actors themselves, contributing to the creation of new markets. Taking up and slightly modifying King and Pearce's classification (2010) of the contentiousness of markets, Figure 1 distinguishes the different roles movements play in market change. Under contention, one finds what are usually considered to be classic social movement actions: i.e., mobilization with a goal of social change targeting specific institutions through extra-institutional means. Movements can exert direct pressure on corporations, for example, by shaming them publicly (Bartley/Child 2007; Den Hond/de Bakker 2007; Weber/Rao/Thomas 2009), through boycotts (King 2008a), or by mobilizing consumers (Balsiger 2010; Dubuisson-Quellier 2009).<sup>2</sup> But contention may also take place within organizations through insider tactics

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2 In economics, consumers are generally seen as the driving force of market change. Markets change because producers adapt to consumer demand. The rise of ethical (or political) consumption has been diagnosed (Micheletti 2004; Harrison 2005) and invoked as the driver of the rise of ethical products and producers. However, studies have also highlighted how changing consumer behavior is a result of social movement organizations mobilizing consumers and making consumption a political issue (Balsiger 2010; Dubuisson-Quellier 2008, 2009). In this classification, therefore, consumption and consumer movements do not appear as a category by themselves. Instead, they are integrated into the other approaches of which they are a constitutive part. Contentious actions often involve consumer mobilization through boycott and buycott; the creation of alternative niches builds on and attempts to create new consumer pref-



such as shareholder resolutions or the formation of special interest groups. The second way in which movements change markets is through collaboration. Movement actors collaborate with corporations to establish new forms of regulation, certification, or labels (Bartley 2003, 2007), where practices are assessed against previously established standards. Such instances of private regulation have become very important in the past 20 years and concern a broad variety of industries. Most of the time, private regulation initiatives involve the participation of social movement or “civil society” actors, firms, and (sometimes) state actors. Private regulation can take many different forms, such as the certification of factories or firms or in the labeling of specific products. Finally, movements also contribute to the rise of new market actors and categories. New markets can be the very expression of social movements; activists may become entrepreneurs or give cultural and material resources to entrepreneurs (Hiatt/Sine/Tolbert 2009; Weber/Heinze/DeSoucey 2008). New organizational forms may be spin-offs from larger social movements, specific expressions of general movements, or merely the inadvertent consequences of social movement activity. In this case, the distinction between who is part of a social movement and who is a market actor is thus sometimes blurred, such as in the case of fair trade shops. Here, I term this phenomenon “alternative niches”, in order to highlight the fact that such new markets, which are the expression of social movements, rise outside of established market actors and can thus be theoretically distinguished from forms of collaboration between movement actors and companies.

### The social movement arena

The multiple tactical approaches of movements reflect the fact that social movements are heterogeneous actors. Movements consist of diverse collective and individual actors who come from different cultural and social backgrounds, and are therefore more or less radical, opt for different tactical choices, and have goals that are often placed on an axis ranging from radical transformation to moderate reformation. While some actors radically challenge corporate practices, others are open to collaboration with firms, and still others want to encourage the establishment of niche markets. Therefore, we can best conceive social movements as arenas or “multi-organizational fields” (Curtis/Zurcher 1973), populated by different collective actors pursuing similar goals, but nevertheless having distinctive tactics, approaches and ideologies, and making strategic choices (Jasper 2011). For a given issue – such as, for example, production conditions in the garment sector – different organizations pursue distinct tactical approaches. To capture this movement diversity within “fields of contention,” Klawiter (2008) suggests the useful concept of “cultures of action.” Such different cultures of action often coexist synchronically within one movement. They can also be diachronically articulated: for

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erences, as does the establishment of labels in collaboration tactics. If we limit the analysis to the observation that consumer preferences change, however, it is not possible to see how different tactics interplay and ethical markets emerge.



example, when the establishment of a niche market for fair trade precedes the rise of fair trade labels. Approaches can enter into competition or conflict with one another. Reformative and radical fringes in movements often disagree over the most appropriate tactics for achieving change (Koopmans 2004). In the realm of fair trade, for example, a more activist culture of action around the creation of an alternative niche of fair trade shops is opposed to a moderate approach, often advocated by development NGOs, centering on a label strategy (Raynolds/Murray/Wilkinson 2007). But often strategies are also complementary. For example, contentious campaigns raise issues, which in turn may lead to forms of collaboration or to the creation of cultural templates on which new market actors build.

### Contexts, movement outcomes, and the dynamic interplay of tactics

Studies on social movement consequences, building on the political process paradigm (McAdam/McCarthy/Zald 1996), have established that the outcomes of movements depend (a) on resources, (b) on the framing and tactics used, and (c) on characteristics of a movement's environment – what has been commonly treated as its political opportunity structure (Amenta/Caren 2004; Giugni 2004). Most authors insist on the interplay of these elements, which has given rise to political mediation models (Amenta 2006; see King 2008a for use in a market context): the outcomes of specific tactics and framings depend on the political contexts in which they are used. Building on political opportunities research, scholars studying movements in markets have highlighted characteristics of corporations (corporate cultures, vulnerabilities, internal allies in the management) and of industries (position as incumbent or challenger, competitiveness or ties to the government) as determinants of movement outcomes (King 2008b; Schurman 2004; Wahlström/Peterson 2006). In addition to corporate or industry characteristics, scholars have also stressed the importance of cultural contexts in explaining movement dynamics and outcomes. In particular, movements have been shown to be more successful if the frames they use (Snow/Benford 1988) resonate with cultural representations dominant in the setting where they take place, and if they thus face favorable cultural contexts.

Movement players thus face structural and cultural contexts, and such contexts may be favorable or constitute barriers for movement outcomes. In most studies in this tradition, opportunity structures are conceptualized as given, static, and somehow passive contexts. But this sometimes leads researchers to neglect movements' capacity to change structures. To avoid the pitfalls of structuralist models (Goodwin/Jasper 2004; Fillieule 2006; Jasper 2011), scholars have suggested an interactionist perspective that conceptualizes a movement's targets as active players who try to shape the further outcome of the interaction to their advantage (Jasper 2011). In such a perspective, "our crisis is our adversary's opportunity, and vice versa" (Jasper 2011: 12). Actors are embedded in structural contexts, but within such contexts they engage in strategic interaction. And

such interaction between movements and their opponents can lead to structural change. Contexts, therefore, are themselves susceptible to being changed by movements. One should therefore speak of interaction arenas with movement players, their opponents, and other relevant players, rather than distinguishing between (active) movement actors and their (largely passive) context. In a perspective attentive of the heterogeneity of movement actors and the conflicts and complementarities between different tactics, one movement player's outcome may thus affect the context of another player's actions. Conflicts between movement actors may arise, for instance, when the actions of movement player B tend to create a more unfavorable environment for movement player A because B's tactics allow A's targets to sidestep demands. This articulation between strategic interactions, the interplay of tactical approaches used by movement players, and contextual factors, lies at the heart of the analysis of movements' role in market change proposed here. This perspective enables us to take into account the diversity of tactical approaches and highlights the conflicting and complementary modes of their interplay, without neglecting the role of contextual factors to explain movement outcomes.

### What kind of market change?

Markets are "social structure(s) for the exchange of rights in which offers are evaluated and priced, and compete with one another" (Aspers 2011 : 4). These social structures are best understood as fields (Beckert 2010; Bourdieu 2005; Fligstein 2001) where producers occupy specific positions, "observe each other" (White 1981) and guide their actions towards one another. Markets are guided by different kinds of rules, both formal (state regulation, industry regulation) and informal (such as cultural norms and "conceptions of control" [Fligstein 2001]) that allow market coordination to take place (Aspers 2011). A market is distinct from every other market through its specific set of network structures, cultural framing, and institutional rules (Beckert 2010). Market boundaries, therefore, are porous. New markets or niches can arise at the borders of existing markets. Geographical location, technology (such as new products) or cultural categories (such as framing products as ethical) can lead to the redefinition of field boundaries and the creation of niches, populated by existing firms, new emerging firms, or a combination of both. In turn, the transformation of markets – the potential for the rise of new niches, for example – depends on the configuration of organizational fields, i.e. the structural and cultural characteristics of existing markets (Carroll/Swaminathan 2000; Rao/Morrill/Zald 2000).

Through the deployment of various resources, social movements bring grievances to markets that can influence corporations to adopt change or serve as cultural templates for the rise of niches. Based on a conception of markets as fields with porous boundaries, we can theoretically conceive of different kinds of change to which movements can contribute:

- Market change can mean the change of rules or practices in the existing market. In this case, change concerns all market players equally, either through external coercion (state power) or through normative institutional change.
- Market change can mean the rise of new markets/niches that distinguish themselves from existing markets. Such new niches can form
  - around new categories/products developed by existing market actors;
  - around new categories with new, emerging producers;
  - around new categories in which both new producers and established ones compete.

Just like the tactical approaches used by movements, these market changes are also interrelated. The study of the processes of market transformation can show how they may be in conflict and how specific configurations and interactions lead to different kinds of market change.

### 3 Research strategy and methods

The case studied here is the rise of market(s) for ethical fashion in Switzerland. In the early 1990s, anti-sweatshop campaigns emerged in many European and North American countries. These campaigns, carried out by various social movement organizations such as development aid NGOs, unions, and student groups, formed around scandals of labor abuses in subcontracted factories in Latin America and Asia that produced clothing for famous brands. The campaigns publicly targeted these Western clothing brands using tactics of shaming and blaming; their main demand was for brands and retailers to take responsibility for working conditions in producing countries by adopting codes of conduct and having them independently controlled (Featherstone 2002; Brooks 2009; Sluiter 2009). In Switzerland, a coalition of NGOs launched campaigns of this kind in the course of the 1990s. These were the first claims on the ethical quality of clothing raised in these countries. But soon, other actors appeared pursuing different strategies. Fair trade and organic NGOs developed specific labels for cotton and clothing, which were adopted by retailers targeted by the campaign. And movement entrepreneurs tried to promote an alternative niche with small fashion designers producing exclusively ethical fashion.

The results presented in this paper draw on fieldwork conducted between 2006 and 2008 on social movement actions on the Swiss market for clothing and on the transformations thereof.<sup>3</sup> The primary research goal was to reconstruct social movement

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3 The scope of the market transformations studied here is limited in two ways. First, I only discuss market transformations that are directly visible to consumers, in the forms of labels or new

activity in the clothing sector and to study the market changes that resulted from this. The empirical inquiry's starting point was the Swiss branch of the Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC), with the goal of retracing its activities over time. The study thus covers the period from the late 1990s to around 2008. Through the information gathered in interviews with key figures of the CCC as well as the attendance of events organized by the campaign and documentary research on movement initiatives and actions in the garment sector, I identified other social movement actors who intervened. The interviews first led me to follow the lead of the actors involved in the campaign's monitoring initiative. From there, I approached officials from the main label initiatives (Max Havelaar, Helvetas, Coop's Naturaline) as well as some firms. Finally, I participated in a volunteers' group of the social movement organization conducting the campaign (the Berne Declaration [BD]) while they worked on the creation of a shopping map for ethical clothes, and identified other grassroots initiatives dealing with labor and environmental issues in the garment industry, some doing campaign work, another dedicated to promoting ethical consumption and production. This latter case – an association based in Lausanne called NiceFuture, was notably outside of the network linking the other actors identified, and was only found through a detour via the French field of ethical fashion,<sup>4</sup> where I met one of its leaders at an event I attended. My approach was thus empirical and inductive and aimed at the identification of all social movement actors active in this field.

I conducted semi-direct interviews with leaders and grassroots activists of all the identified initiatives. Interviewees were asked to speak about the initiatives of their organizations over time and to identify the main difficulties they had faced. While I progressed with the identification of field actors, I also asked questions about their relationships with one another. Finally, interviews dealt with the social and cultural backgrounds of interviewees and their personal trajectories. All in all, 24 interviews were conducted, of which twenty were with social movement actors, three with officials from firms and one with members of the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO).

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ethical brands for example. Everything that leads to clear signals for consumers – what can be called market equipment – is analyzed. This excludes from the study important transformations on the markets for clothing that are not directly visible to consumers, but are clearly linked to movement activity as well. These are market transformations focusing up the commodity chain; not signaling downwards, from producers to consumers, but moving up the chain from brands to their contractors. In particular, an organizational field has emerged around the conduct of social audits. Second, the scope is limited insofar as I focus on markets for individual consumers. The market for clothing also contains an important segment catering to collective consumers, notably in the production of uniforms or other working wear. I do not consider this market here.

4 The research draws on my doctoral thesis, where I compared the fights for ethical fashion in Switzerland and France.

#### 4 Activities and the cultures of action in campaigning and collaboration approaches

On the social movement side, the first actor to raise the issue of production conditions in the clothing sector was the Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC), which was launched in 1999. Three organizations were behind the campaign: the Berne Declaration (an advocacy group for development politics founded in the late 1960s) and two development aid NGOs – Bread for All (a Protestant organization) and the Swiss Catholic Lenten Fund. The campaign put pressure on corporations to adopt codes of conduct on the issue of production conditions in clothing factories, and urged them to join so-called multi-stakeholder initiatives to independently monitor codes. The targets were the biggest sellers of clothing – two general retailers and many more specialized clothing firms that had been previously identified through a market investigation (a total of fifteen in the first campaign round). Through petitions and ratings, the campaign publicly shamed retailers for their practices. But it also gave them positive incentives by educating consumers and giving them the tools to become political consumers (notably through the “ethical ratings” of firms that are built on the model of classic product tests by consumer associations but evaluate firms according to ethical criteria [Balsiger 2010]). The postcard petition that launched the campaign in 1999 continued over several years, and declarations in the campaign’s newsletter indicate that 48,000 postcards were sent in the campaign’s first year and a total of 70,000 by 2003.

While the CCC was putting pressure on corporations to adopt social standards, some movement actors developed organic and social labels that firms could use to designate parts of their clothes as ethical. Two prominent initiatives of this kind were launched in Switzerland in the early to mid-2000s (that is, several years after the CCC had launched its campaign). The organizations behind both of them came from the development aid sector. The first, a label for organic cotton developed by the NGO Helvetas, the biggest Swiss development aid organization, was actually a development aid project: producing organic cotton should give farmers in developing countries greater revenues and at the same time protect them from environmental hazards. The basic idea was to find commercial retail partners in Switzerland who were ready to market the products from the development aid projects and thus to fund them. For Helvetas, this meant collaborating with Swiss firms, a strategic renewal that was met with some criticism within the organization, since it conflicted with the development aid sector’s historic critique of aid that merely reflects the interests of Swiss economic actors (Holenstein 1998). The project started off once it found commercial partners (the retailer Migros and the clothing firm Switcher) who guaranteed a long-term commitment to buy the organic cotton produced by the project’s farmers. It was subsidized and supported by the Swiss government. On the one hand, the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) and the Agency for Development and Cooperation<sup>5</sup> financed the project to develop organic

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5 Public development aid in Switzerland is foremost the domain of the Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), which is part of the foreign ministry. However, the SECO, an office

cotton production; on the other hand, the SECO also funded a center for organic cotton situated within Helvetas, with the task of promoting organic cotton and contributing to its development in Switzerland and internationally.

The second such initiative was fair trade cotton labeled by Max Havelaar (MH).<sup>6</sup> It was developed at around the same time as the CCC. The first MH cotton was sold by Switcher, Migros and Manor in 2005. In spite of its NGO background (MH Switzerland was created by the country's six most important development aid NGOs, among them Bread for All, the Swiss Catholic Lenten Fund, and Helvetas), the functioning of MH is very much business-oriented. Firms are licensees and have to pay MH a fee in order to carry the label; in exchange, they benefit from the legitimacy and the high profile of the name Max Havelaar. As such, the initiative resembles the Helvetas organic cotton project, with which it actually collaborated, since part of the organic cotton was also certified as fair trade by MH. Both MH and Helvetas pursued similar agendas and adopted a "business strategy" to achieve their political goals (fairer and more environmentally friendly conditions in production processes in developing countries).

A third initiative shared some characteristics with these two collaborations, but did not involve the participation of a social movement organization. Coop, the main competitor to Migros in retailing, also developed its own product line of ethical (organic and socially responsible) clothes, called Naturaline. This was a private, business-driven project, developed by a cotton trading firm. It originated in the early 1990s as a personal project of the firm's owner. In an interview, he presented himself as someone whose family lives a somewhat alternative lifestyle, eating organic vegetables, not giving antibiotics to their children, and sending them to a private school devoted to the anthroposophist and biodynamic principles of the humanist Rudolph Steiner. As the head of the cotton trading firm, he started a small experiment with organic cotton in India – at first, in his own words, as a "hobby." At the time of the project's launch, organic cotton was in its pioneering stage. Coop quickly became the project's main economic partner; for the retailer, the mid-1990s corresponded to the time when it started developing its range of organic food – vegetables, fruit, dairy products and meat – and organic cotton fitted into this strategy. In the course of the 2000s, the cotton trading firm converted fully to organic cotton and launched its own label, called bioRe, which takes into account both organic and social standards. By selling bioRe products, Coop became one of the world's leading outlets for organic clothing.

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situated within the Ministry of Economy, has traditionally pursued development aid as well. In the past, it was especially this kind of aid which was criticized as being mostly about defending Swiss economic interests, and the office still pursues a market-based approach to development aid, notably through the promotion of labels.

6 Max Havelaar Switzerland is part of the Fair Labor Organization (FLO), the international labeling initiative for fair trade.



Campaigning and collaboration are in many ways distinct tactical approaches. The CCC can be characterized as a classic social movement organization with a contentious action repertoire. Contention takes a slightly different form on markets than it does in the political arena, as action repertoires are adapted to consumer issues (for example in the use of brand evaluations). Also corresponding to a contentious mode of claim making, campaigning is preferably done using diagnostic frames (Snow et al. 1986). Instances of labor abuse are taken up and firms publicly held responsible for them. Solutions for how to deal with the issues – “prognostic” frames – have been developed, but the core domain of the CCC is contentious targeting and campaign making. The organizations pursuing collaboration, on the other hand, do not use contentious frames or action forms. Instead they develop concrete solutions for problems, often in collaboration with firms. Finally, the immediate goals pursued by both approaches have been different as well. While they both shared a general, abstract goal of improving social and environmental conditions in industrial production, their approaches would lead to different concrete goals. In the case of the CCC, the goal was that firms submit their entire production to independently monitored labor standards. In the case of collaboration initiatives, the goal was to certify specific products, and thus to single out value chains that correspond to better standards.

The difference in approaches corresponds to different organizational positioning in the social movement arena and different social backgrounds of the individual actors behind the initiatives. The difference is relatively marked if we compare the Berne Declaration to the development aid organizations that drive the collaboration projects. The BD is part of the “political” pole of the field of development organizations and has, since its founding in the late 1960s, carried out many campaigns targeting firms or the state (Holenstein Renschler/Strahn 2009). Organizations like Helvetas are part of the “projects” pole of this field. Their main concerns are concrete development aid projects conducted in developing countries. The members of the staff conducting the CCC for the BD were two young women who had activist backgrounds before they joined the campaign, whereas the development aid organizations tend to employ their staff based on professional skills. This is especially true of MH, which recruited people without any activist or development aid background, solely based on their expertise in specific industrial sectors.

However, this picture also somewhat overstates the differences: there is actually a lot of overlap between the two “cultures of action.” Indeed, it seems more appropriate to speak, in this case, of a continuum between an activist and a business-oriented pole. The overlap is organizational: two development aid organizations were initially part of the CCC. The overlap also concerns action forms: development aid organizations often support campaigns more or less actively, and the CCC wanted to establish a collaboration with firms to monitor codes of conduct. Furthermore, the overlap concerns individual actors. Within one organization, we can find more or less “radical” employees with more or less strong activist backgrounds, and there are no recruitment barriers between the two



poles. Thus, while campaigning and collaboration are distinct approaches, they have often been used concomitantly by the same organizations or by organizations that are associated in a dense network.

### Interplay effects and outcomes

How did the co-existence of tactics of campaigning and collaborating affect the shaping of the market for ethical fashion? At the core of the analysis, there is a triangular relationship between the CCC, the collaboration initiatives (MH and Helvetas organic cotton) and the firms. The CCC preceded the collaboration initiatives, and it initially faced a relatively favorable environment. In view of its goals, the campaign had some quick successes: most targeted firms adopted codes of conduct (although not exactly the code of conduct advocated by the campaign), and three of them (Switcher, Veillon and Migros) agreed to participate in a pilot project on code monitoring. Several elements favored the establishment of an independent monitoring initiative at this stage. Characteristics of the responding firms and their position in their respective markets certainly played an important role. Two of them saw an opportunity in positioning themselves as “ethical” brands, while the third one (Migros) was in an “ethical” competition with its main competitor on the retail market, Coop. Furthermore, it is likely that the proximity between the campaign actors and the firms was important. In the past, there had been similar campaigns that had placed the same actors in opposition to one another. The first one of these took place in the early 1980s and concerned production conditions in pineapple plantations; it had resulted in the establishment of a social clause. In the course of these precedents, firm officials and campaign organizations had become familiar with each other. Finally, the campaign began at a time when the market for ethical products had already started to develop in Switzerland (with organic and fair trade goods available at the big retailers, for example), giving signals to retailers that ethical issues might pay off. In sum, there were a number of cultural and structural factors that favored campaign outcomes at this early stage.

The collaboration initiatives entered the game at a later stage. Their “environment” was constituted of the same relatively favorable contextual factors that the CCC faced – the appeal of “ethical” markets and “ethical” competitions and proximity between social movement actors and firms. One of them – the Helvetas cotton project – further benefited from state subsidies. In addition to this, the CCC’s previous activities have to be counted as an important factor. Through its campaigns on the issue of production conditions in supply chains in the clothing sector, it had put pressure on clothing brands and retailers and raised consumer awareness on ethical issues linked to fashion. In doing so, they had paved the way for collaboration forms – or, in other words, the campaign had contributed to creating opportunities for movement actors who proposed forms of collaboration to retailers. Firms were under public pressure and looked for ways of dealing with the question of production conditions and showing their ethical

commitment. Collaboration through labels was a handy way to do so, and was widely adopted by firms. As we have seen, many of the major companies targeted by the campaign started selling organic or fair trade textile products: Migros (MH and Helvetas), Coop (through its own label), Switcher (MH and Helvetas) and Manor (MH).

In addition to other contextual factors, the collaboration initiatives thus also benefited from the activity of the campaign, which served as a door opener; collaboration initiatives promised a market-based solution that allowed firms to partly respond to the pressure placed upon them by the CCC. But while the campaign favored collaboration initiatives, the opposite was true in the other direction, from collaboration to campaign. Once in place, collaboration initiatives changed the configuration of the game for the campaign. From the campaign's perspective, the different tactics were in conflict, since targeted firms could use collaboration as a form of sidestepping the more encompassing demands of the campaign.

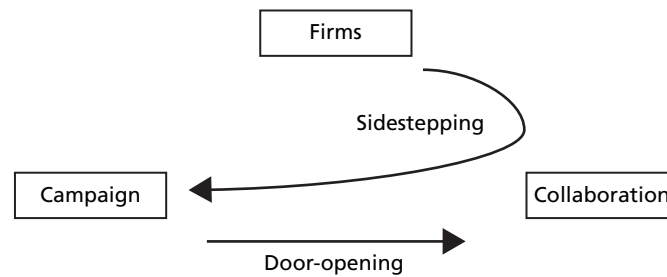
For the organizations behind the campaign in Switzerland, the competition between their campaigning approach and the collaboration approach used by other NGOs was evident and perceived as a danger. The case of MH textiles most explicitly reveals this conflict between different approaches within the social movement arena. The launching of MH fair trade cotton coincided with the pilot project involving firms and the campaign organizations around code monitoring. The two staff members heading the campaign at the BD at the time were strongly opposed to the launch of certified clothing which, according to one of them, "ruined the campaign":

[W]e were conducting a campaign for all firms to adopt a code of conduct as a basic system for their entire production. In this situation, having MH arriving and saying "listen, we do not look at everything you do, make a niche, propose 1% of your production, and that's it" – there were big conflicts there. [...] Especially with Migros, we said "impossible!" We would never have accepted this. It really allowed them to adopt a discourse that highlights their commitment. (Interview, campaign official, July 2007)

There were several meetings between MH and the campaign coalition, but MH persisted in developing the label. The campaigners then tried to shape the definition of social criteria for MH products on the supply chain (the fair trade label concerns only the cotton production and none of the many fabrication steps further up the value chain). They also attempted to use MH as leverage for their campaign, making it mandatory for companies selling MH certified clothing to become members of a monitoring initiative, but without success.

While campaigning thus opened up opportunities for movement actors pursuing collaboration strategies, the latter had the opposite effect on the former: the development of labels helped firms sidestep campaign demands and made it harder for campaigners to achieve their goals. Figure 2 illustrates the interplay between the two tactical approaches, depicting the triangular relationship of campaigners, collaboration initiatives and firms. The arrow that leads from campaign to collaboration signals that campaign-

Figure 2 Interplay of campaigning and collaboration tactical approaches



ing, by putting the issue on the public agenda, opened up doors for collaboration initiatives. The arrow leading from firms via collaboration to campaigns illustrates that collaboration forms allowed firms to sidestep the campaign, which had a hampering effect on the latter.

Activists often emphasize this potential conflict between contentious campaigning and collaboration forms (see also, for example, a report by a network of anti-sweatshop activists on the same topic Maquila Solidarity Network [2006]). Not all members of the campaign coalition saw such strong conflict between labels and the campaign; some were more pragmatic and saw both approaches as distinct and complementary. This is a case of the classic debate over the respective merits of radical and reform strategies: for reformers (in this case, collaboration NGOs), small steps can be a first stage toward more encompassing change; whereas for more radical groups, they actually prevent broad change from happening. In this case, there is more evidence for the latter than for the former. The initial success of the campaign, in the form of monitoring initiatives, experienced a setback when companies developed market-based counterstrategies such as labels. The rise of collaboration initiatives certainly complicated the picture for campaigners and gave firms more possibilities for reacting to campaign demands. However, there are also cases where firms use both labels *and* participate in private regulation through monitoring initiatives. Not all firms, therefore, use collaboration as a form of sidestepping.

## 5 Creating an alternative ethical fashion niche

In addition to campaigning and collaboration approaches, other movement actors also attempted to create an alternative niche around new producers embracing ethical fashion. In Switzerland's French-speaking region, a small association called "NiceFuture," dedicated to the promotion of a more sustainable lifestyle through different activities, organized the first Swiss ethical fashion show in Geneva in 2008. At this event, some

twenty designers, shops and associations exhibited their products. Among them there were some brands from France (where a similar ethical fashion show had existed for several years), some Swiss designers, as well as NGOs like Helvetas presenting its organic cotton label. The same year, a similar event had taken place for the first time in Basel, in the German-speaking region of the country. Called Green Fashion, it was a section dedicated to ethical fashion within a fair on environmental protection and sustainability called “Natur.”<sup>7</sup> Finally, the year before, a group of activist-volunteers from the NGO Declaration of Berne in Zurich had created a “map for ethical shopping.” On this map, the activists identified all the shops in the city where ethical clothes can be bought.

The two initiatives I studied<sup>8</sup> had in common the use of broad criteria for what counted as ethical fashion. The shopping map listed shops according to four criteria: labor conditions, environmental issues, recycling (second hand), and Swiss made. Similarly, the Geneva show included exhibitors putting forward ecological or social commitments as well as using recycled materials. The two groups also shared a common belief in the role that individual change can play in bringing about social change. For the leaders of NiceFuture, a group founded by two young professionals running a “green” communication agency, ecological principles of sustainable development are a matter of individual change. Creating a more sustainable society does not require political and systemic change, or at least this is not the path they favor. They defend an individualized ecology where a more sustainable society originates from individual and moral change. This individual change, in turn, can be brought about when ethical behavior is presented as easy and hip and accessible to everyone. In its actions – a festival for sustainability, Facebook groups inciting small gestures for a more sustainable planet, or the ethical fashion show – NiceFuture tries to perpetrate this individualized vision of social change. The volunteers who created the ethical shopping map were driven by similar concerns. Most of the members of this small group were young undergrads or graduate students. In contrast to NiceFuture, they were more integrated into the Swiss social movement field, volunteering for the BD. In the past, many of them had participated in various other social movement groups promoting social and environmental causes such as WWF. But they, too, believed individual responsibility should play a part in bringing about social change; in their daily lives, for example, all of them took great care to buy ethical products whenever possible, and they expressed the view that everyone should share this responsible behavior. The shopping map reflected this concern, constituting a guide for people allowing them to shop in accordance with their ethical values.

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7 *Natur* itself was incorporated into Muba, one of Switzerland’s biggest commercial fairs.

8 I did fieldwork on NiceFuture and the BD’s volunteer group, not on the Basel fair.

### Interplay effects between campaigning and the promotion of alternative niches

The initiatives aiming at the creation of an alternative niche (or at making such a niche more visible) drew on the CCC's anti-sweatshop campaign, as well as on many other movement campaigns that had revealed the "politics behind products." The CCC in particular had raised the issue of ethical production for clothing. In doing so, it had also created a demand for ethical fashion; consumers drawn to the campaign wondered where they could satisfy their desire to buy ethically produced garments. In the case of NiceFuture, the relationship to the campaign was not direct and conscious. The leaders of this group, more distant from the Swiss social movement arena, were more inspired by ethical production in other domains (they had previously published an "ethical shopping guide" that covered a wide range of products) and by the French example of a thriving ethical fashion show and market. In the case of the BD volunteers, of course, the link to the CCC was much more present. They had been drawn to the regional volunteer group mostly because they had followed the CCC, were attracted to this particular campaign, and wanted to contribute to it. They voiced personal frustration when trying to buy ethical clothes, as well as concerns by friends. One volunteer, for example, said: "I think when one buys clothes it is really stressful. Because somehow you can't just buy items Made in Cambodia and at the same time you don't know where to buy other clothes that you can still afford" (Interview, BD volunteer, August 2007).

For the campaign, the rise of such a niche and its "promotion" – whether it is populated by new emerging firms or by labels from established retailers – may be seen as complementary to the campaign and as a form of inciting not-yet-ethical producers to join the movement. This is what had happened once the conflict with MH was over; the campaign makers now had to deal with the existence of such a niche market and actually started to value it in their evaluations of brands. Retailers such as Coop or Switcher, who had embraced collaboration with NGOs or launched important ethical product lines, were promoted by the campaign and thus rewarded. Demonstrating the feasibility of ethical production should serve as a model for other retailers. The ethical shopping map was in the spirit of this strategy and responded to a consumer concern the campaign makers had heard very often.

But in other ways, the development of an ethical fashion niche also ran counter to the interests of the campaigning approach. In relation to campaigning tactics, the stakes are similar to those that place this tactic in opposition to collaboration. The rise of a niche – whether it consists of collaboration of NGOs with established firms or of new emerging firms taking up movement demands – can be seen as a potential obstacle to achieving encompassing change on markets. Again, this was most visible within the CCC itself, as the creation of a shopping map juxtaposed both approaches within the same organization, the Berne Declaration. In spite of the media success of the map, and although the volunteers were highly motivated to produce maps for other cities, the campaign leader decided to stop the project. He clearly voiced concerns about demobilization;

the existence and promotion of an ethical fashion niche could signify to the campaign's public that action was no longer necessary and lead them to a retreat from public action, opting for exit instead of voice (Hirschman 2004). The existence of such a niche means that concerned consumers (i.e., those who are likely to mobilize in campaigns) can purchase their clothes at ethical stores, while the great majority of consumers do not care about this matter and no global change takes place on the mainstream market. Instead of broad social change, the result would merely be the rise of a small niche for ethical consumers. This perceived trade-off between contentious mobilization and the creating of alternatives characterizes all consumer campaigns and has been observed in many other movements (Dubuisson-Quellier 2009).

## 6 Two kinds of niches: The interplay of tactics and outcomes

Did such an alternative niche emerge and if so, how was it composed? During the observation period and in the three identified attempts, it is striking that very few small Swiss clothing designers actually took part in this niche, whether by participating in one of the fairs or by appearing on the map. Most Swiss designers on the map had been included because they produced in Switzerland, but this did not necessarily mean that they self-identified with the category of ethical fashion. As for the Geneva show, it was the stated goal of its initiators to demonstrate the potential of ethical fashion to small Swiss designers: for example, one of NiceFuture's founders told us that the show was also about "showing stylists that natural fabrics exist and that they can work with it, which is why we launch an ethical fashion award" (Interview, NiceFuture, February 2008). Thus, the appeal of the "ethical" category was not (yet) self-evident to producers, and cultural work had to be done in order to promote it. This difficulty, I argue, must be linked to the outcome of the previous interplay between campaigns, collaboration initiatives and firms – i.e., the fact that established retailers had already "occupied" the niche for ethical fashion.

The contrast to the French case may help exemplify the role that the cultural definition of the niche by big retailers and labels may play. In France, big retailers only very tentatively adopted ethical labels. Compared to Switzerland, the market for organic and fair trade cotton, for example, was very small, as is shown in Table 1.

But for the same period in France, one observes a thriving alternative niche built around the Ethical Fashion Show, held for the first time in 2004 in Paris. This show succeeded in assembling a wide variety of small producers and in creating a collective identity for an ethical fashion niche. This collective identity went beyond adding ethical aspects as part of the qualities of clothing. In addition, the show and its brands put great effort into presenting ethical fashion as *fashionable*. To this end, part of the activist image needed to be removed from ethical clothes. Marketing language rather than activist language



Table 1 Ethical offer by established retailers, Switzerland and France

Fair trade cotton MH France (in tons)	Fair trade cotton MH Switzerland (in tons)	Organic cotton F (main vendors; in tons)	Organic cotton CH (main vendors; in tons)
2005: 60 2006: 715 2007: 1500 2008: 2400	2005: n.i. 2006: 91 2007: 933 2008: 633	Monoprix: 2004: 50 2006: 163	Coop: 2004: 1000 2006: 1428 Migros: 2004: 100 2006: 500

Source: annual reports (Max Havelaar), International Trade Centre (organic cotton).

was used. Everything related to the Ethical Fashion Show was designed to transmit this image of hipness: from the choice of the venue to the printed bilingual catalog to the brands exhibited. In order to be accepted, it was not sufficient for companies to produce their products ethically; the collections also had to satisfy the aesthetic expectations of the show's organizers. The brands themselves promoted this image too, through their websites, flyers, and advertisement.

All these aspects of framing ethical fashion as hip were also present in the Swiss initiatives, although some of them were critical of it and did not want to lose sight of political concerns. Both NiceFuture and the BD volunteer group wanted to show that it is possible to buy clothes that are both ethical and respond to aesthetic concerns. "What we are interested in is fashion. Something that is contemporary, that men and women of our times appreciate. Nice cuts, textures, and so on [...]" (Interview, NiceFuture, February 2008). But rather than encountering small firms that actively embraced this ethical producer identity, the social movement entrepreneurs had a difficult task; indeed, at this stage, ethical fashion still had a negative image among Swiss producers. This is what is suggested by a report based on a survey of small clothing brands in the Zurich area. It revealed that the label "ethical fashion" did not serve as a positive form of identification. It was not viewed as an opportunity to reach new consumers, but rather as potentially damaging for business. The brands interviewed for the study associated "green fashion" (*Ökomode*) and fair trade fashion with a negative image, "certainly not with 'fashion' or 'design'" (Starmanns et al. 2009: 27). None of them actively tried to position itself as a brand of ethical fashion.

It seems that separating ethical fashion from an activist image and making it look fashionable and hip was made more difficult by the fact that big retailers and labels had occupied this niche. On the one hand, these retailers were not known for making hip clothes and thus associated ethical fashion with mainstream clothing. But more importantly, through the collaborations, ethical fashion continued to be strongly associated with the activist world. Swiss retailers had actively sought out proximity to movement actors and collaborated with them in order to have legitimacy as providers of ethical clothing. For existing retailers that had been targeted by an anti-sweatshop campaign for their labor conditions, collaboration with NGOs was the best way of presenting oneself as an "ethically conscious" firm. Doing so without this precaution involved im-



portant risks, as the campaign would inevitably denounce it.<sup>9</sup> But this also meant that ethical fashion continued to be associated with NGOs and with a particular clothing style like that sold by big retailers. The cultural meaning of the niche (Carrol/Swaminathan 2000) linked it to an identity that was different from the one promoters of an alternative niche had in mind. This context made it more difficult for a niche, built on a different definition of ethical fashion as fashionable, to emerge, which may explain the difficulties that social movement entrepreneurs had in doing so. Previous interactions between social movement actors and firms, resulting in the establishment of organic and fair trade labels and product lines, had thus shaped the opportunities for the initiatives promoting an alternative niche. Of course, this does not mean that different providers for ethical fashion, some catering to fashion-sensitive customers and others offering basic mainstream products, cannot coexist. The case just shows how processes involving different movement actors and firms matter and how they may shape one another's environment.

## 7 Conclusion

Social movements consist of many individual and collective actors who pursue different tactical approaches. Such approaches can be complementary, but they may also be in conflict with one another. In this study, I have analyzed how the interplay of approaches impacts movement outcomes on the market for ethical fashion in Switzerland. Three approaches were present on this market: contentious campaigns, NGOs pursuing collaboration, and movement entrepreneurs promoting an alternative niche for ethical fashion. The examination of the interplay between these approaches reveals that they have important complementarities: campaigns, by putting the issue on the public agenda, pave the way for other movement actors and thus contribute to a favorable environment for those pursuing approaches aiming at niche creation. The analysis therefore reveals how contextual conditions for specific movement actors are also influenced by other actors belonging to the social movement arena. But sometimes, different approaches are also in a competitive or even conflicting relationship. The case study shows two instances, in particular, where approaches entered into conflict. In

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9 This can be seen notably in the case of Coop, which had an ethical product line that was not associated with a legitimate NGO. Although the organic and socially responsible Naturaline brand preceded NGO-backed labels, it came under attack by social movement actors once the latter became established. In particular, they criticized Coop's use of the term "fair trade" when advertising Naturaline. Coop benefited, however, from a certain credibility within activist circles as a pioneer in retailing organic and fair trade products; it was even awarded a prize for its role in the development of the organic market in Switzerland by the Berne Declaration in 2007. This may explain why the controversy around Naturaline remained fairly restricted to the "abusive" use – in the eyes of NGOs – of the term "fair trade," without questioning the overall legitimacy of the "ethical nature" of this product line.

one instance, collaboration forms became a way in which firms sidestepped campaign demands, thus helping them avoid more encompassing change. In this sense, one could say that one movement approach diminishes the chances of success for another (in this case, campaigns); or that it leads outcomes in a new direction by seizing upon the dynamic the campaign had launched and diverting it towards collaboration. This is facilitated by the fact that the organizations pursuing collaboration are more moderate and develop market-based solutions that allow firms to position themselves on a rising niche market. Second, approaches also entered into conflict because the outcomes of this first dynamic between campaigns, firms and NGOs pursuing collaboration shaped the environment for actors trying to promote an alternative niche. The analysis, backed by a comparison with the French case, suggests that the “occupation” of the ethical fashion niche by big and established retailers made it difficult for movement actors to motivate new entrepreneurs for this niche. Ethical fashion had been defined in a particular way, linked to NGO labels and mainstream styles, and a great deal of cultural work was required in order to create a more fashionable niche that is distant from the activist image of traditional ethical garments.

The study contributes to scholarly discussions on social movement outcomes and more particularly, to social movements’ consequences for markets. Regarding social movement outcomes, the paper suggests a greater emphasis on the interplay of movement actors using a variety of tactics. Taking into account the diversity within the social movement arena is important when studying movement outcomes, because it allows us to see how different approaches are sometimes complementary and thus favor movement success, but can also be in competition with one another. In interaction processes involving different movement actors, their targets and other actors, the interplay between different approaches shapes outcomes; the outcome of one tactical approach, for example, may become the “political opportunity” for another one. While a number of studies have increased our understanding of the process of market change through social movements focusing on one approach and treating others as contextual (Bartley 2003, 2007; Weber/Heinze/DeSoucey 2008), addressing their interplay directly promises important future insights into the dynamics of market change. Such an analysis can then reveal, for example, how targets of a given movement may use the diversity of strategies to play different movement actors against each other. Analyzing the interplay between different approaches also leads to a dynamic view of the process of niche creation. The main effect of the movement for ethical clothing was the creation of market niches, but such niches can take different forms. Collaborations between established firms and social movement actors can enable the creation of niches situated within established firms, with movement players providing legitimacy capital for the identity change. On the other hand, niches can also emerge around new market players that embrace an ethical philosophy and situate themselves at the boundaries between movement actors and market actors. These distinct processes of niche creation are not only situated differently in structural terms of networks, but also lead to different forms of cultural framings of the niche based on different organizational identities, which are likely to be

in tension with each other. When the niche first emerges in the form of collaborations between firms and movement actors, this may constitute an additional obstacle for the creation of an alternative niche around new producers.

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